

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3138

UNCLAS JIDDA 8306

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, CDES, SA

SUBJECT: PILGRIMAGE TRAGEDY: INQUIRY FROM THE NATION OF ISLAM

REF: STATE 294813

1) INFORMATION LEANED FROM SCANTY NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS INDICATE SERIOUS GAS DEVICE FIRES OCCURRED AMONG HAJJ ENCAMPMENT AT MINA IN WHICH ABOUT 138 PILGRIMS DIED AND 151 WERE INJURED. REPORTEDLY SOON AFTER CONFLAGRATION REMAINS OF VICTIMS WERE INTERRED IN A COMMON EXCAVATION.

2) SAUDI CIVIL DEFENSE, DEPARTMENT OF HAJJ, AND POLICE JIDDA AND MECCA NEAR MINA, UNABLE OR NOT READY TO FURNISH ANY INFORMATION OR BREAKDOWN ON NATIONALITIES OF VICTIMS. SAUDI MFA AND OTHER MINISTRIES IN POSITION TO FURNISH INFORMATION ON TRAGEDY ARE CLOSED UNTIL DECEMBER 20.

3) DUE TO THE THOUSAND OF UNREGISTERED PILGRIMS AND THE DISPERSED LOCATION OF THEIR PERSONALS AND DOCUMENTATION (IN HOTELS, WITH GROUP LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS) IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE SOME TIME BEFORE DEAD, MISSING OR PRESUMED DEAD CAN BE IDENTIFIED. ONLY ISOLATED INDIVIDUAL AMERICAN PILGRIMS SEEKING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CONTACTED EMBASSY. EMBASSY UNABLE DEVELOPE TRACE ON MESSRS. MENDHI KHAN AND AYUB KHAN.

4) EMBASSY INFORMED THAT RESPECTIVE MISSIONS OF NATIONALS
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FOUND TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN TRAGEDY WILL BE INFORMED

IN DUE COURSE. FORMAL REPORT ON FIRE AND VICTIMS HAS
BEEN REQUESTED FROM HAJJ OFFICIALS. EMBASSY CONTINUING
TO DELVE FOR INFORMATION FOR REPORTING TO DEPARTMENT AND
CONSULAR GUIDANCE. BECAUSE NON-MUSLIMS NOT ALLOWED TO
ENTER MECCA AND MINA, CONSULAR OFFICER PREVENTED FROM
INVESTIGATING TRAGEDY PERSONALLY. SEVERAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
AND ONE DOCTOR AT THE MECCA HOSPITAL, HOWEVER, HAVE TOLD US THAT
THE VICTIMS WERE IRANIANS WITH SOME PAKISTANIS.
WE WERE TOLD THIS BEFORE INQUIRY REFTEL, BUT BELIEVE IF KNOWN
AMCITS HAD BEEN AMONG THE CASUALTIES THEY WOULD
HAVE MENTIONED THIS TO US.
HORAN

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